What is claimed is:

1. A method of processing a plurality of elements which have leading and trailing edges and may be of different lengths between said edges, including the step of driving the elements successively along a path to a predetermined position along the path at which an operation can be performed on the elements, wherein one of said edges of each said element is detected as it passes a datum point, which is a predetermined distance from said predetermined position, and wherein the one edge of each said element is driven the predetermined distance from the datum point to the predetermined position after the one edge is detected.

2. A process for performing a plurality of operations on an element having a leading and a trailing edge, which operations are performed at respective spaced apart locations, including the steps of:

(a) feeding a said element towards a first said location;

(b) sensing the passage of the element towards the first said location;

(c) sensing when the trailing edge of the element passes a datum point a predetermined distance from the first said location;

(d) driving the element whereby its trailing edge is moved said predetermined distance to said first location after it is sensed, and performing the operation associated with the first location on the element; and

(f) driving the element to a second said location at which its trailing edge is a respective predetermined distance from said datum point, and performing a respective operation at the second location;

and wherein for movement of any element between the first and second locations, and irrespective of the length of the element, the trailing edges of said elements are driven the same distance.

3. A process for performing a plurality of operations on an elongate element, which operations are performed at respective spaced-apart locations, comprising the steps of:

(a) feeding a said elongate element towards a first said location;

(b) sensing the passage of the elongate element towards the first said location and stopping said elongate element when its trailing edge has been sensed, the stopped position of the trailing edge comprising a datum position therefor;

(c) moving the elongate element by respective drive means such that the trailing edge is disposed at a second location and at a respective distance from the datum position and performing a respective operation on the elongate element;

(d) moving the elongate element by respective drive means such that the trailing edge is disposed at a third location and at a respective distance from the datum position and performing a respective operation on the elongate element, and so on until the plurality of operations has been performed;

and wherein for movement of any elongate element between two successive locations, and irrespective of the length of the elongate element, the respective drive means is actuated identically.

4. A process for performing a plurality of operations on an envelope having a flap and a body with a crease line therebetween, which operations are performed at respective spaced-apart locations and are associated with the crease line, comprising the steps of

(a) feeding the envelope unflapped, with the crease line trailing, towards a first said location;

(b) sensing the passage of the envelope towards the first said location and stopping the envelope when the crease line has been sensed, the stopped position of the crease line comprising a datum position therefor;

(c) moving the envelope by respective drive means such that the crease line is disposed at a second location and at a respective distance from the datum position and performing a respective operations on the envelope;

(d) moving the envelope by respective drive means such that the crease line is disposed at a third location and at a respective distance from the datum position and performing a respective operation on the envelope, and so on until the plurality of operations has been performed;

and wherein for movement of any envelope between two successive locations, and irrespective of the length of the elongate element, the respective drive means is actuated identically.

5. A process as claimed in claim 4, wherein at one said location the respective operation comprises flapping the envelope.

6. A process as claimed in claim 5, wherein at the next said location to which the envelope is moved the respective operation is an insertion operation.

7. A process as claimed in claim 6, wherein the envelope is subsequently moistened and including the step of urging the envelope towards a moistening element when the crease line is in a predetermined position whereby to moisten a predetermined part of the envelope.

8. A process as claimed in claim 7, wherein the envelope is subsequently sealed, including the step of causing buckling of the envelope when the crease line is in a predetermined position and urging the crease line into a sealing means.

9. A process as claimed in claim 8 and including the step of actuating an inducer facilitating said buckling when the crease line is in the predetermined position.

10. Apparatus for performing a process as claimed in claim 9 and comprising means for performing said feeding, means for performing said sensing, means for identifying and recording the datum position, and means for driving respective predetermined distances relative to the datum position for each of the plurality of operations.

11. Article handling apparatus comprising a transport path, drive means for transporting an article having leading and trailing edges along said path, means for detecting when one of said edges of the article reaches a predetermined reference position on said path, means for performing an operation on said article when said one edge of the article arrives at an operating position on said path at a predetermined distance from said reference position, and control means, responsive to the edge detecting means detecting that said one edge of the article has reached said reference position, to cause the operation performing means to perform said operation on the article when the drive means has transported said one edge of the article by said predetermined distance from said reference position.